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Islamic Intelligence by Design

Why Islamic Schools Need a Responsible AI System

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PRACTITIONER INQUIRY

"Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise."

WHO I AM AND WHY THIS MATTERS

15 Years

NYC Department of Education teacher and school leader

Global Education Leader

Principal at international and bilingual schools in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait

Head of School

Wellspring Schools (Islamic)

Founder

Creative Transformations, Elhaam Academy, Elhaam Foundation

Creative Transformations

Global education consulting company

School Launch	Full-Service Management
Leadership Development	Accreditation Support
Grant Writing	Strategic Planning
Professional Development	Curriculum Development
Technology Integration	Data Analytics

AI in Education Ecosystem

AI-Powered Teaching | AI for Educator Leader Success

Teaching AI With Confidence (13-book K-12 series)

ILM Fusion | TaskFixer AI | Responsible AI System

THE MOMENT WE ARE IN

A Shift That Is Both Pedagogical and Philosophical

The Reality

Generative AI tools can now produce essays, summaries, and explanations in seconds. Students have access to these tools inside and outside of school.

The Problem

Traditional assignments that rely on recall or predictable written responses can be completed by AI, allowing students to bypass the thinking processes schools aim to develop.

The Stakes

For Islamic schools, this is not just an academic issue. It is a question of intellectual responsibility, moral discernment, and what it means to seek knowledge with purpose.

FINDING 1

No Shared Language or Framework for AI

Educators lacked shared language and a values-aligned framework for addressing student AI use. Existing assignments were largely completable by AI without requiring meaningful student thinking.

What This Looked Like in Practice

- Teachers could not articulate a school-wide position on student AI use
- No common definitions existed for what counted as academic integrity in an AI environment
- When asked, most educators said they were waiting for direction from leadership
- Assignment audits revealed heavy reliance on recall-based and summary tasks

FINDING 2

Uneven AI Use Across Classrooms

Implementation work revealed uneven AI use across classrooms within the same school. Some teachers integrated AI tools regularly while others avoided them entirely. This disparity surfaced the urgent need for a school-wide AI policy framework.

Some Classrooms

- Using AI tools for lesson support
- Discussing AI with students openly
- Experimenting with AI-assisted feedback

Other Classrooms

- No AI tools used at all
- AI treated as a threat to academic honesty
- No guidance on how or whether to engage

WHAT SHIFTED

Following Structured Implementation Sessions

Teachers began asking fundamentally different questions about how assignments were designed.

The shift was not about banning or permitting AI. It was about rethinking what learning is supposed to look like.

BEFORE	AFTER
Can students submit this without thinking?	Does this task require reasoning AI cannot replicate?
How do I catch AI cheating?	How do I design so there is nothing to cheat?
Should we ban AI?	What is our school's values-aligned stance on AI?

Schools did not lack concern about AI.

They lacked a coherent system for responding to it.

Reactive Restrictions

Schools oscillated between banning AI entirely and allowing unrestricted use, with no principled framework guiding either decision.

Unanswered Questions

Teachers, students, and leaders all had different and often conflicting understandings of what responsible AI use meant in their context.

Values Misalignment

Without a framework, schools could not connect AI decisions to their Islamic educational mission, leaving the most important question unasked.

What Our Children Are Actually Facing

A values-neutral AI policy cannot see any of these. That blindness is why the response must be ours.

01

Bias

AI erases our tradition, teaching Muslim students the Islamic Golden Age produced no one worth naming.

02

Misinformation

AI fabricates Hadith and Quranic translations with full confidence. The risk is not academic. It is theological.

03

The Fake Friend

AI companions mimic a best friend for profit. A child's heart handed to a tool with no deen.

04

Deepfakes

Fake explicit images, mostly of girls, spread through a school by lunch. An assault on the haya it guards.

INTRODUCING

Islamic Intelligence by Design

A balanced design that unites three forms of intelligence so schools can be both smart and sacred.

Human Intelligence

Reasoning, empathy,
creation, and moral judgment

Artificial Intelligence

Speed, pattern recognition,
drafting, and adaptation

Divine Guidance

Islamic principles that
define purpose and boundaries

Six Design Principles That Anchor Every AI Decision

Niyyah	Amanah	Adl	Ihsan	Shura	Rahmah
Intention	Trust	Justice	Excellence	Consultation	Mercy

ISLAMIC INTELLIGENCE BY DESIGN

The Four Qualities We Seek to Cultivate

These are not soft goals. They are the design constraints of Islamic education in the age of AI.

Intellectual Responsibility

Taking ownership of one's own thinking and learning. AI can produce. Only humans can take responsibility for what they put forward.

In practice: a student signs their name to an essay only if they can defend every line as their own.

Reflective Reasoning

Thinking deeply before acting or concluding. Speed is AI's strength. Slowness and deliberation are ours.

In practice: a student slows down to question an AI answer instead of copying the first thing it gives.

Moral Discernment

Evaluating information through an ethical and Islamic lens. Not everything that is accurate is beneficial. Ilmun nafi is the filter.

In practice: a Grade 6 student examines a biased AI output and names who it leaves out.

Purposeful Knowledge

Seeking knowledge for benefit, not convenience. Niyyah shapes whether AI serves the student or replaces the student.

In practice: a student asks whether AI is helping them learn or just helping them finish.

Four Interconnected Components

Built on the principle that Islamic schools do not need to choose between technological engagement and values-centered education.

01

Leadership Guidance

Equipping school leaders with the knowledge and tools to make ethical, informed, and proactive decisions about AI

02

Instructional Redesign

Rebuilding assignments and learning tasks so they prioritize reasoning, explanation, and authentic thinking over recall

03

Student AI Literacy and Responsible Use

Teaching students to interpret, evaluate, and use AI responsibly through the lens of Islamic values and intellectual integrity

04

Teacher Development

Preparing educators to navigate AI-integrated learning environments with confidence, clarity, and pedagogical purpose

COMPONENT 01

Leadership Guidance

Ethical AI use starts at the top.

AI Vision Development
Leaders define what responsible AI use looks like inside their school's Islamic educational mission

Policy Framework
Moving from reactive bans to structured, values-based school-wide AI policies

Ethical Decision Making
Guidance for navigating difficult questions about student AI use, academic integrity, and institutional accountability

THE AI DESIGN CHECK

Run this in 12 minutes before adopting any AI tool:

Niyyah
What is our purpose?

Amanah
How is data protected?

Adl
Who benefits? Who is excluded?

Ihsan
Quality or only speed?

Shura
Who was consulted?

Rahmah
Does it increase dignity?

If AI can complete the assignment, the assignment needs redesigning.

Assignment Transformation: From AI-Bypassable to AI-Resistant

AI Can Do This	Redesigned for Thinking
Write a summary of the chapter	Explain which idea challenged your thinking most and why
List the five pillars of Islam	Describe how one pillar has shaped your daily choices this week
Define key vocabulary terms	Use three vocabulary terms to explain a decision a leader in our community could face

The goal is not to ban AI. It is to design tasks where genuine thinking is the only path forward.

COMPONENT 03

Student AI Literacy and Responsible Use

Students need more than digital skills. They need Islamic discernment.

1

Interpretation

Students learn to critically evaluate AI output rather than accepting it as authoritative

2

Responsibility

Understanding how AI decisions affect others and what it means to use it with amanah

3

Islamic Framing

Connecting AI literacy to concepts of ilm, aql, and the ethical pursuit of knowledge

4

Agency

Developing the capacity to decide when AI serves learning and when it undermines it

Same tool, two different uses. The difference is what the student tells it to do.

We give students the move that turns any AI from ghostwriter into tutor.

AI as Ghostwriter	AI as Tutor
Does the thinking for the student	Makes the student do the thinking
Hands over a finished answer	Refuses to just give the answer, and teaches with an example
Looks like learning happened	Makes the student say the idea back in their own words, so it sticks

AI as a thinking partner, never a thinking replacement. The full Tutor Prompt is a student takeaway.

Teachers cannot lead what they have not been prepared for.

What Teachers Need

- Foundational AI literacy relevant to their subject area
- Language for discussing AI use with students and families
- Strategies for redesigning AI-bypassable tasks
- Confidence navigating real-time AI decisions in the classroom
- A school-wide framework so no teacher is deciding alone

What PD Looks Like

- Hands-on AI exploration sessions
- Assignment redesign workshops
- Case study analysis from Islamic school contexts
- Collaborative policy development
- Ongoing coaching and feedback cycles

What a School Walks Away Holding

01

An AI vision statement

Grounded in Islamic Intelligence by Design, naming what AI will do for students and what it will never replace.

02

An AI use policy

What is allowed, what data is protected as an amanah, how AI use is disclosed, and who decides the gray areas.

03

Grade-band literacy and responsible-use expectations

What every student understands and can do with AI by the end of each year, from K through 12.

04

A bank of redesigned, AI-resistant assignments

Real tasks rebuilt so genuine thinking is the only path forward, replacing work AI can finish in seconds.

05

A family awareness brief

One page telling families what AI looks like at school, warning them about AI companions, and giving them one thing to do at home.

A Four-Phase Process You Run After Today

Leaders and teachers each have a clear job in every phase. Start the week you return.

01

Assess

Leaders run the AI Readiness Assessment. The whole team sees an honest starting point before building anything.

02

Ground

Leaders and teachers align on Islamic Intelligence by Design, so every decision runs through the same six principles.

03

Build

Leaders build the vision and policy. Teachers redesign assignments and teach responsible use, guided by the AI Design Check.

04

Review and Scale

The team reviews with the six principles, strengthens the weakest domains, and extends the work across grade bands.

THE BIGGER ARGUMENT

Islamic schools are uniquely positioned to lead.

The broader education world is still searching for a values framework for AI. Islamic schools already have one. The question is whether they will use it.

Rooted in Ilm

The Islamic tradition of knowledge-seeking provides a ready framework for evaluating what AI does and does not serve

Values as Infrastructure

Islamic schools do not need to add values to their AI response. Values are already the foundation.

Community Trust

Families trust Islamic schools to make decisions grounded in faith. That trust is the authority to lead.

Where Your Team Starts This Week

01

Audit your current assignments

Identify which tasks can be completed by AI without meaningful student thinking. This is your starting point for instructional redesign.

02

Define your school's AI stance

Leadership should articulate a values-based position on AI that reflects your Islamic educational mission, not just a policy document.

03

Build shared language

Ensure teachers, students, and families are working from the same definitions of academic integrity, AI use, and intellectual responsibility.

04

Start with professional development

Teachers cannot lead students through AI challenges they have not navigated themselves. Invest in structured, ongoing teacher learning.

05

Connect to your Islamic intellectual tradition

Frame every AI conversation through the values of ilm, amanah, and aql. This is your advantage. Use it.

The question is not whether AI will enter Islamic schools.

It already has.

The only question left is whether Islamic schools will respond reactively or lead with intention, with values, and with a system.

Let us build that system together.

JAZAKALLAH KHAIRUN

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Scan for the deck and resources